

What has become of "The Society for Opening Public Monuments to the People?" An effort now on their part might be useful.*

EFFECT OF THE WANT OF REALITY ON THE WORKS OF MODERN ARCHITECTS.

AGREEING, as I do, with every word that Mr. Pugin has written in reply to the remarks in the *Rambler*, as quoted in your last leading article, I think the question there entered on so important to architects and architecture in general, that I propose to make a few remarks on the subject.

Were it only one architect that made the complaint, it would not, perhaps, be worth while alluding to it: but every architect of the present day has, I believe, said the same thing in other words, and every building shows evident marks of having been submitted to the pruning process complained of in Mr. Pugin's pamphlet. The facts, indeed, of the case, I believe to be universally admitted. The question is, the causes of their existence; for there are no facts in the world without causes, or which are intelligible without their antecedents being more or less understood.

To me the cause of all the difficulty appears so self-evident, that the only difficulty is to understand why all the world does not see it as clearly as myself; but they do not, and it is possible, therefore, that I may be mistaken; but, at all events, allow me to try to state my view of the case, and leave others to judge of its correctness or otherwise.

Before descending to particulars I must first try and state the question generally. Anterior to the Reformation in the sixteenth century, architecture in Europe, and in all other countries down to the present day, was a progressive art, in which copying and retrocession were unknown, and decorated construction the elemental formula.

Subsequent to the Reformation a new element was introduced in Europe—that of copying antecedent and dead styles; progress was unknown, retrocession the fashion, and construction generally concealed. Prior to the Reformation, all buildings in Europe—and down to this day in all other countries—are satisfactory, more or less beautiful, and worthy of study. Subsequently to that period none are quite satisfactory in Europe, and all contain falsehoods and deformities, of which we become ashamed as soon as the fluctuating fashion that produced them has passed away.

Lastly, no buildings in the first period show the defects of which Mr. Pugin complains; and neither in the lives of the architects, nor in their works, do we find any evidence of that struggle between the architect and his employer, which he so pathetically deploras. Few buildings since the Reformation do not bear marks of the struggle on their face, and every architect has repeated his complaint.

These premises having been granted, either in whole or in part, it appears to me that they stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect.

To make this more plain, let us try an example. Mr. Pugin complains that in one instance his buttresses were so attenuated as to be ridiculous: this often happens now-a-days, never when Gothic had a true style,—and the reason is obvious. When using a stone roof, or a wooden one composed of immense masses of badly arranged timber, a buttress was requisite to resist the thrust, and being always exactly proportioned to the thrust to be resisted, was always appropriate and beautiful, and no employer could object to what was indispensable. The improvements in carpentry in the present age are such that we can construct roofs of twice the span used in churches, and rest them securely on walls without buttresses, and do so every day. All the world know this, and know, therefore, that they are mere useless adjuncts; and more than this, all the world do not believe them beautiful.

The same is true of pinnacles; it was found

necessary to weight walls to enable them to resist thrusts, and because they were necessary they were used and made as ornamental as possible; they are now expensive shams, and therefore objected to.

Mr. Pugin objects to thin walls. It is certain they were not much used in the Middle Ages, because skilled labour was rare; unskilled labour abounded, and it was cheaper to erect a thick mass of rude masonry than a more perfect one of less dimensions. A thick wall is, however, far from being a beauty in the abstract, and certainly is not a convenience. A perfect wall will, I believe, always be found to be one exactly proportioned to the work it has to do, and the durability it is wished to attain; so at least they thought in the Middle Ages, and people now naturally object to the expense of walls thicker than are wanted, merely because a rude people could not build thinner ones.

Arches of brick plastered are, of course, very great abominations; but why use them at all? The question is here the same as before; owing to the thickness of their walls, and the weight of their roofs, our forefathers did not believe brick would suffice to bear them,—so they always used stone in their situation. We know better, and can easily construct brick arches to support our lighter walls and roofs; and the common sense of the world, in consequence, rejects the more expensive material; and so they would have done in the Middle Ages, and did on the shores of the Baltic, and in the valley of the Po; and so architects would do now, if they either knew their own interests, or those of their employers.

But it is needless to multiply examples; let us try and state the question another way. It is proposed to erect a building, say a parish church, to accommodate a certain congregation. This can be done in a common-sense modern edifice, with a sufficient amount of ornament and character, for say 5,000*l*. No, say all the ecclesiologists, archaeologists, and amateurs of mediæval antiquities, this can never do; and the architect is made to ask 5,000*l*. more, to put the church into a mediæval dress,—in other words, to crowd the floor with pillars, which prevent people from seeing and bearing,—to abolish galleries, which accommodate crowds at a small expense; to deepen the chancel, so that the clergyman's voice cannot be heard, &c. &c. All this people might not object to, because it is fashionable; but when the argumentum ad pecuniam comes in aid of common sense, then commences the struggle, and the congregation naturally say,—if we must conquer, let us at all events do so at the least possible expense; then comes the docking of pinnacles, the attenuation of walls and buttresses, the plastering of arches, and all those heresies so much deplored; and, if I am not very much mistaken, they always will result when a sham, not truth, is attempted.

The above is as true if applied to Grecian as to Gothic architecture. If an architect gets a commission for a Grecian Doric church, his first idea is a Parthenon: glorious dream! The aide colonnades, however, soon vanish; but he may venture to propose a portico in rear as well as in front; but even that is not tolerated: perhaps two or four three-quarter columns? No. Then the inner range of the front portico? No: that too must disappear; so must also the more extensive adjuncts and ornaments; and he is left with a skeleton, of which both he and the public are ashamed. The truth is, the architect wants as many columns as he can get; the public as few as possible, because they are useless, expensive, and inconvenient. Every argument of common sense is against them—"hinc ille lachrymæ"—the struggle between archaeology and common sense commences. In nine cases out of ten the former is beaten.

It is not, however, that the public are more niggardly than they were. They never, so far as I can observe, object to pay for what they want, when they are satisfied they are getting full value for their money; but they do object to pay for what they do not want, and will not spend their money in what is not only useless but inconvenient.

Mr. Pugin seems to think that when the public are better informed in matters of art, this state of things will end. The conclusion I have arrived at is diametrically opposed to this; my belief being that as soon as the

public are informed as to the processes by which these ancient buildings were erected, they will insist on architects repeating them, if only for an experiment, to try if what is true in everything else may not be true in architecture, that like causes produce like effects. Up to this time no information on the subject has been published, but once the public are as familiar with the modes in which Gothic buildings were produced as they are with the forms, I am very much mistaken if they do not adopt the spirit, and reject the form; and the moment they do, there is an end of all Gothic or pagan reproduction. Architecture will resume her progressive and creative course, and servile copying and retrocession become impossible.

J. F.

ON THE MAUSOLEUM OF HADRIAN, NOW THE PORT ST. ANGELO, AT ROME.*

It is remarkable how much knowledge of the habits, occupations, and even religion of an ancient people may be gained from the kind of edifices their architects were called to construct. So much is this the case, that, if the pages of history were all blotted out, the dumb monuments, which time has spared, would speak to us of the recreations, the morals, the mode of life, and even the mode of death adopted by the ancient Greeks and Romans. In no age has the architect the choice of the buildings he would erect. His business is to give shape and proportion to the edifices which the climate, the habits, the religion, or the popular pursuits of a people demand. The buildings of ancient Rome, which afforded the most ample scope for architectural skill, would not be required, for instance, in our metropolis. The buildings, which give scope for the architects' skill, the porticoes, theatres, baths, are lost to our time and climate.

It is with special reference to sepulchral monuments that I have introduced these preliminary remarks. These afforded a field for the architect of classic times, which in our day has been entirely transferred to the stone-mason. The pyramids in Egypt, the monument of Philopappus at Athens, and the sepulchres of Augustus and Hadrian at Rome, were among the most conspicuous edifices of their respective countries and ages. But where now should we find a tomb in our public cemeteries or graveyards which would require any skill to construct, beyond what might be found in a very moderate artist. I speak not of the monuments of our great men, which the art of sculpture has touched, and which stand under the shelter of a cathedral vault—admittance, 6*d*.; children, half-price. Speaking, as I intend to do, of sepulchral monuments as buildings, I have yet to ascertain the cause why this class of edifice has been lost to the modern architect. The cause is in the change which Christianity has wrought in the hopes and prospects of what may happen after death. The ancients considered a tomb in a much more important light than we either can or ought to do. So feeble were their expectations of living in their fancied Elysium, that they generally looked forward to the honour of a tomb, as the only blessing that awaited them. Hence the anxiety so frequently discovered on monumental buildings, which the individual, during lifetime, had erected for providing for himself and his family a place of burial free from intrusion. The initials—H. S. P. V. Hoc sibi fecit vivus, "He made this for himself while he was alive"—we constantly find on ancient tombs. And we cannot wonder that the wealthy, under these circumstances, should have bestowed so much of their substance in erecting their private monuments, and the warrior and the statesman so much care and toil in gaining this as a public honour.

The ancient Romans erected their splendid tombs by the sides of the public roads; and from the remains still existing along the Via Appia, that road might, without any further indications, be traced for at least 4 miles from Rome.

The early sepulchres of the Republic at Rome were of that kind called Hypogææ, that is, chambers under ground, with an elevation little more than enough to exhibit the inscription.

* Read at a meeting of the Architectural Institute, 6th March.

* Mr. Ewart has given notice that, after Easter, he shall move an address to her Majesty, praying that she may be pleased to take into consideration the expediency of causing our cathedrals and churches to be generally open (as far as is practicable) throughout the day, with a view to encourage the practice of private devotion therein, especially for the benefit of the poorer classes of the community.